

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-14 SS-15 PM-05 ISO-00 H-02
SSM-05 SIG-03 PA-02 ACDA-12 /092 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:WBHARRIS:DP
APPROVED BY NEA/P:GFSHERMAN
PA/PRESS - MR. CARTER
H - MR. FLATEN
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA/IAI - MR. SMITH
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER
NEA/EGY - MR. NEWBERRY
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM

-----022291 050118Z /66

O 042354Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
JCS WASHDC 0000
CIA WASHDC 0000
SECDEF WASHDC 0000
NSC WASHDC 0000
USCINCEUR
USICA WASHDC

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD; TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - MAY 4, 1978

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR MAY 4, 1978. FYI
ONLY, OFFICER PRESENT TODAY WAS KEN BROWN.

Q. IS THE ADMINISTRATION PREPARED TO MODIFY THE COMPONENTS
OF WHAT USED TO BE CALLED THE MIDDLE EAST WARPLANES PACKAGE?

A. LET ME GIVE YOU WHAT I HAVE ON THAT. I'LL JUST READ
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THE WHOLE GUIDANCE FOR YOU, SO WE WON'T BREAK IT DOWN INTO
INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS, AND TELL YOU FROM THE BEGINNING THAT
IT'S ESSENTIALLY ALL THAT I WILL HAVE FOR YOU TODAY.

AS THE SECRETARY SAID YESTERDAY AGAIN AND THE PRESIDENT
BEFORE HIM, WE CONSIDER THE AIRCRAFT PROPOSALS TO BE BALANCED
AND AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR OVERALL POSITION IN THE MIDDLE
EAST. THEY ARE INDEPENDENTLY JUSTIFIED AND MUTUALLY
REINFORCING, AS DEPUTY SECRETARY WARREN CHRISTOPHER SAID
YESTERDAY. AS SUCH, WE STRONGLY BELIEVE CONGRESS SHOULD
NOT DISAPPROVE THEM.

-

OVER THE PAST WEEKS, WE HAVE BEEN HAVING CONSULTATIONS
WITH INTERESTED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO EXPLAIN THIS POSI-
TION TO THEM. YESTERDAY, IN THE TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE AND ACTING SECRETARY
CHRISTOPHER'S INFORMAL MEETING WITH THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, THAT CONSULTATION INTENSIFIED.

NATURALLY, IN EXPLAINING OUR POSITION, WE ALSO LISTEN TO
THE LEGITIMATE CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS.

AS MR. CHRISTOPHER SAID YESTERDAY, AS PART OF THE NORMAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCHES WE ARE WILLING TO CONSIDER SUGGESTIONS WHICH REFLECT LEGITIMATE CONCERNS.

I HAVE NOTHING FOR YOU ON ANY SPECIFICS OF CHANGES WHICH MIGHT BE CONSIDERED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT LEGITIMATE CONCERNS EXPRESSED IN CONGRESS.

Q. THIS LAST PARAGRAPH THAT YOU'VE READ US, ARE YOU SAYING THAT CHRISTOPHER SAID THIS YESTERDAY ON THE HILL?

A. HE WAS ASKED DIRECTLY IF WE WOULD CONSIDER CHANGES; AND HE SAID THAT OF COURSE IF THE COMMITTEE ASKED US TO UNCLASSIFIED

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CONSIDER SOMETHING, WE WOULD CERTAINLY BE WILLING TO CONSIDER IT.

Q. HE SAID THIS IS A VERY DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE; AND, OF COURSE, IF IT CAME UP WITH ANY IDEAS, WE WOULD ENTERTAIN IT -- WHICH WAS A POLITE WAY OF SAYING THE OBVIOUS. BUT THIS GOES WELL BEYOND WHAT HE SAID, AND I JUST WANTED TO MAKE IT CLEAR IF YOU ARE LEANING ON HIS PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF YESTERDAY OR SOMETHING THAT HE IMPARTED TO THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE PRIVATELY.

A. I MEAN TO REITERATE WHAT WAS SAID PUBLICLY YESTERDAY. THIS IS WORDING THAT MR. CHRISTOPHER IS AWARE OF SO I'M NOT TRYING TO BREAK NEW GROUND HERE. I'M TRYING TO SAY AGAIN, OR STATE AGAIN, THE POSITION THAT WE TOOK YESTERDAY -- TO NOTE THAT IT IS PART OF THE ONGOING TRADITIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO BRANCHES OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR ONE TO CONSIDER SUGGESTIONS OF THE OTHER AND WE'RE SAYING THAT WE WILL.

Q. CAN YOU SAY WHETHER THE FOCUS OF THIS IS ON THE PLANE SALES TO ISRAEL OR ON SOME ASSURANCES THAT SOME SENATORS FEEL ARE REQUIRED REGARDING THE SALE TO SAUDI ARABIA?

A. WHAT I MEAN TO INCLUDE IN THIS IS THE LEGITIMATE CONCERNS BEING EXPRESSED TO US BY CONGRESS.

Q. WELL, ARE ANY CHANGES BEING CONSIDERED? CAN YOU ANSWER THAT YES OR NO?

A. I CAN'T GIVE YOU A YES OR NO ANSWER. I CAN ONLY REFER TO THE WORDING THAT I'VE JUST USED.

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Q. YOU'RE LEANING ON YESTERDAY'S TESTIMONY. CHURCH ASKED CHRISTOPHER SPECIFICALLY WHETHER THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD AGREE TO UPPING THE ISRAELI PACKAGE FROM 15 TO 25 F-15; AND THEN HE GAVE A VERY, VERY GENERAL ANSWER, WHICH YOU ARE NOW AMPLIFYING. THAT SPECIFIC KIND OF THING -- IS THAT REGARDED BY THE ADMINISTRATION AS A LEGITIMATE CONCERN?

A. THIS WOULD BE ONE OF THE CONCERNS THAT HAD BEEN EXPRESSED BY CONGRESS AND, THEREFORE, WOULD BE COVERED BY WHAT WE ARE SAYING WHEN WE SAY THAT WE ARE WILLING TO CONSIDER SUGGESTIONS WHICH REFLECT LEGITIMATE CONCERNS. IF THIS IS ONE OF THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED TO US BY CONGRESS, THAT NATURALLY WOULD BE AMONG THOSE CONCERNS.

Q. YESTERDAY HODDING VOLUNTEERED US A STATEMENT ABOUT THE SITUATION IN LEBANON AND DEPLORED THE ATTACKS ON THE UN FORCES AND SAID THAT THEY SEEM TO HAVE BEEN LAUNCHED BY LEBANESE LEFTISTS AND PALESTINIAN EXTREMISTS, SOME OR ALL OF WHOM WERE CONNECTED WITH THE PLO. IN THE MEANTIME, THERE ARE STORIES ON ALL THE WIRES SAYING THAT ARAFAT HAS BEEN OUT BEATING THE BUSHES IN BEIRUT AND ARRESTING AND PLANNING TO PUNISH THOSE PALESTINIANS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATTACKS. I WONDER, IN LIGHT OF THAT, IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY THAT MIGHT MODIFY WHAT HODDING SAID YESTERDAY, WHICH SEEMED TO PUT THE ONUS ON THE PLO AND HENCE ARAFAT.

A. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING NEW, BUT I WOULD RECALL THAT HODDING NOTED THAT THE PLO WAS A BROAD UMBRELLA WHICH COVERED A LOT OF DIFFERENT GROUPS.

Q. SALAH KHALLAF, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS ABU IYAD, WHO IS SOMETIMES THOUGHT TO BE NUMBER TWO IN THE PLO AND THE ONE IN CHARGE OF MILITARY OPERATIONS, WAS QUOTED IN AN INTERVIEW YESTERDAY AS SAYING HE SPECIFICALLY DID NOT ACCEPT
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A CEASE-FIRE. DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT?

A. I DON'T HAVE A COMMENT.

Q. YOU SAID EARLIER THAT YOU WEREN'T AWARE WHETHER THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH MR. BEGIN DURING HIS TOUR OF THE UNITED STATES. COULD I ASK YOU TO TAKE

THAT QUESTION IN A FORMAL WAY BECAUSE I NOTICE THAT BETWEEN LOS ANGELES AND CHICAGO, HE DROPPED REFERENCE IN HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS TO HIS OPPOSITION TO THE PLANE PACKAGE, AND I'M JUST WONDERING WHETHER SOMEONE IN THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION POINTED OUT TO HIM OR SPOKE TO THE ISRAELI OFFICIALS ABOUT THAT ONE PARTICULAR SUBJECT, WHETHER IT'S CONSIDERED IMPROPER OR SOMETHING FOR A FOREIGN VISITOR TO GO AROUND THE COUNTRY MAKING SPEECHES AGAINST ADMINISTRATION POLICY. THE QUESTION IS, DID THE ADMINISTRATION GET IN TOUCH WITH MR. BEGIN IN SOME WAY AND URGE HIM TO CHANGE THE CONTENTS OF HIS ADDRESSES, TO DELETE CERTAIN REFERENCES? AND SECOND, IN RELATION TO HIS TALKS WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY, BECAUSE HE SAID THERE HAS BEEN A BREAKTHROUGH ON MONDAY EVENING, AND YESTERDAY HE DENIED IT.

A. I'LL TRY TO GET AN ANSWER FOR YOU.

Q. YESTERDAY, MR. CHRISTOPHER SAID THAT DAYAN AND VANCE HAD DISCUSSED THE PLANE SALE QUESTION DURING DAYAN'S VISIT HERE LAST WEEK, AND I REMEMBER ON TWO OCCASIONS THEY WERE BOTH ASKED THAT QUESTION PUBLICLY, AFTER FINISHING THEIR MEETINGS, AND THEY SAID THAT THEY HAD NOT ADDRESSED THAT PARTICULAR QUESTION. COULD YOU FIND OUT WHEN AND WHERE THEY DID? PERHAPS IT WAS IN ANOTHER SETTING, NOT THE STATE DEPARTMENT, PERHAPS AT THE WHITE HOUSE.
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A. I'LL TAKE IT.

2. THE FOLLOWING ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS TAKEN AT THE NOON BRIEFING OF MAY 3 WERE POSTED IN THE DEPARTMENT ON MAY 4:

Q. HAS THE PLO ACCEPTED RESOLUTION 425?

A. NO, NOT EXPLICITLY. AS YOU KNOW, SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM MET WITH ARAFAT DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO THE AREA. OUR UNDERSTANDING IS THAT ARAFAT COMMITTED THE PLO TO COOPERATE WITH THE UN PEACEKEEPING FORCES.

Q. HOW MANY UN TROOPS ARE IN PLACE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON?

A. A TOTAL OF 3,984 TROOPS WERE IN PLACE AS OF MAY 3, ACCORDING TO INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE UNITED NATIONS.

Q. WHAT IS THE US POSITION ON EXPANDING THE UNIFIL TO

6,000 MEN?

A. THE US GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S PROPOSAL TO INCREASE UNIFIL BY 2,000 TROOPS, BRINGING THE TOTAL TO 6,000. AMBASSADOR YOUNG EXPRESSED THIS SUPPORT IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING OF MAY 3.

Q. HAVE ANY LEBANESE ARMY TROOPS MOVED SOUTH?

A. A FEW LEBANESE ARMY PERSONNEL ARE IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY, NOTABLY AT TYRE, BUT NO UNITS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY HAVE YET MOVED INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON.

THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAS SENT 30 POLICEMEN INTO THIS AREA AND IS PLANNING TO SEND SOON APPROXIMATELY ANOTHER 30.

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CHRISTOPHER

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